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Elias Nason.

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OF

REV. ELIAS NASON, A.M.

BY

WILLIAM BLAKE TRASK, A.M.

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THE REV. ELIAS NASON, A.M.

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ELIAS NASON, son of Levi and Sarah (Newton) Nason, was born in Wrentham, Massachusetts, April 21, 1811. "In looking over the genealogical papers in our old family Bible," he says, "I discover that I was introduced into this bright and beautiful world at two o'clock in the afternoon of the first Sunday after Easter." "The place of my birth was the southwestern chamber of an old farm house, situate about one mile east of the church and cluster of buildings, public and private, which form what is called the 'centre of the town.'" In his Gazetteer of Massachusetts, under Wrentham, he writes:—"The village at the Centre has an air of neatness, affluence, and unpretending beauty."

His father, born in Walpole, Massachusetts, in 1779, was, at the birth of Elias, and about one year subsequently, an occupant of a farm in Wrentham, having carried on the business of a farmer from the time of his marriage in 1809. On the 7th of May, 1812, he removed to Hopkinton. In company with Mr. O. Gilmore, he purchased of Samuel Day, of Wrentham, a large lot of primeval timber, standing on Saddle Hill. The son says:—

> They erected a dwelling house on the margin of Indian Brook, and occupied it for about two years, clearing up the forest, at the same time, and burning the timber into charcoal, or turning it into lumber at the saw-mill of Dr. John Wilson, near by.

In this house the father remained until the month of May, 1815, Mr. Gilmore having previously removed to the State of New York.

Elias attended school at the early age of three years, his first teacher being Miss Ann Johnson. The alphabet was learned by him, as he was informed by his mother, in the first three weeks. A scar, received about that time, remained visible through life. When he was nearly four and a half years of age, occurred the noted gale of September 23, 1815. This he distinctly remembered. The house in which the family resided "creaked so dismally," that the mother took her son and a younger child, Eliza Edwards Nason, not quite two years of age, to another house in the neighborhood, where they formerly lived, then occupied by Mr. Sylvanus Johnson; there they tarried until the storm had passed. The boy wore, as the writer of this memoir did, at about the same age, "a red morrocco hat with its narrow rim buttoned up at the sides over the ear." He then went to a school kept by Susan Johnson. A favorite amusement with him, was to make himself serviceable, as a young lad might, at the saw-mill near his home, run by George Wilson. The next year, his father removed, with the family, to the house of the noted Rev. Nathanael Howe, minister of Hopkinton. He had, previously, engaged to carry on Mr. Howe's farm "at the halves." "That was called 'the cold year,' the frost appearing in every summer month, and cutting down the crops. While mowing, we are informed, the hay-maker saw the glittering ice on his scythe. The farmers seldom, if ever, had a more disastrous season, yet Mr. Nason "uncomplainingly toiled on, and accepted with a cheerful heart the scanty share allotted to him." The son used to repeat the Assembly's Catechism to Mr. Howe, and to sit upon his knee while the latter sung, "Once I had a hobby horse," &c. "The most highly valued present," says Mr. Nason, in the memoir written by him, of Mr. H., "which the writer of this has ever received, is a Bible given him by the Rev. Mr. Howe as 'a reward of merit,' when a boy at school." Mr. Howe once took Elias to ride, and gave him a felt hat, "of which," he said, "I was sufficiently proud." In the summer, he went to a dame school, taught by Mary Farrar; in the winter, David Fiske was his teacher. Perry's spelling book, in its rude form, as would

be considered by children of the present day, was his reading book then, at school. Subsequently, he attended a private school, Rev. Mr. Stow the teacher.

In the year 1817, his parents removed to the town of Medway, and there his father carried on the Harding farm, conditionally, as with Mr. Howe. The family attended the church of the Rev. Jacob Ide, D.D. Under the tuition of Polly Cutler and Eliza Brewer he made proficiency in his studies, and then learned some of the hymns of Dr. Watts, which he well remembered, particularly one commencing, "How can I sink with such a prop as my eternal God." His loved uncle, Elias,* on one of his visits to the family, gave his name-sake half a dollar for speaking the well known piece, beginning, "You'd scarce expect one of my age to speak in public on the stage." These were among the embryo utterances of the young orator, who in after days spoke with so much eloquence and power in the lecture-room, pulpit, and the general assembly of the people. The chief school books of this period were, the Testament, and "The Art of Reading," probably by Daniel Staniford. Calvin Fairbanks was the teacher, and Simeon Cutler his rival. Elias "sat on the low seat in front."

* Elias[4] Nason, half brother to Levi,[4] father of the Rev. Elias,[5] "was one of the pioneers in the manufacture of straw, and also of cotton goods in Norfolk county, and had many people in his employment. For a long period he kept the village store and tavern, indicated by a golden ball. He was a justice of the peace, and held many town and county offices. He also represented the town in the General Court. Few men in that section of the State were better known, or more highly esteemed than 'Squire Nason,' as he was generally called. In his disposition he was mild, and in his manners courteous and obliging. His rule was to speak well of every one, and as a consequence almost every one spoke well of him. To a young man who asked him for the secret of his success in business, he laconically replied, 'Work, work, work.' That young man, now grown old, attributes his good fortune to that secret."

Elias[4] Nason, born in Walpole, Dec. 24, 1768, son of Thomas[3] by his first wife Jemima Clark, of Foxborough, m. Lois Richardson, in December, 1792, by whom he had one daughter, and three sons. He m. 2d, in October, 1824, Susanna Keith, by whom he had two sons, and a daughter. He died at Easthampton, Oct. 2, 1853, aged 85 years. His wife Susanna died at Foxborough, March 14, 1840, aged 40 years. A distinguished son of the latter, Professor Henry Bradford Nason, now living, was born in Foxborough, Mass., June 22, 1831. He is Professor of Chemistry and Natural Science in Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York. "An eminent writer has said of him: 'He is in my opinion one of the most competent scientific instructors of our country.'" A biographical sketch of Prof. Nason, written by his cousin Elias, the subject of this memoir, is inserted, with a portrait, in "The Popular Science Monthly" for March, 1888, pages 694–696.

The family on the 1st of April, 1818, took up their abode at the celebrated Sir Charles Henry Frankland place, in that part of Hopkinton now called Ashland. The estate originally contained upwards of 100 acres of land. In the preface to his Life of Frankland, Mr. Nason says :—

It was my fortune to spend several of the happiest years of my boyhood at the Frankland Place, in Hopkinton, Massachusetts; to see some few of the fast-fading memorials of Sir Charles Henry and Lady Agnes Frankland; to gather fruits and flowers from the trees and shrubberies which they had planted, and especially to hear from the lips of Mrs. Mary Hildreth,—a lady of unusual force of mind, whose former husband, Dr. T. Shepherd, received the place from Mrs. Swain, as early as 1793,—the Rev. Nathanael Howe, Matthew Metcalf, Esq., Gilbert Dench Wilson, and others who had been well acquainted with a brother and sister of Lady Frankland, or their children, the romantic story of the visit to Marblehead, the rescue of the knight by Agnes Surriage from death at Lisbon, and other incidents connected with their eventful life at Hopkinton and Boston. At that period, indeed, some of the negro servants of Mrs. Swain, a sister of Lady Frankland, were still living, and a few aged persons, as Madam Elizabeth Price, who could well remember Sir Harry himself.

These remarkable stories, associated, as they were, with the old mansion and the wild and picturesque domain once occupied by the Indians, made a vivid impression upon my imagination, and I afterwards determined to verify them as opportunity might occur, and commit them to writing. In doing this, I have examined many manuscript and printed pages, and files of colonial newspapers; I have fallen unexpectedly upon Sir Henry's Journal, —written in his own hand and covering a period of about thirteen years,— and have also received assistance and letters of encouragement from many different individuals.

The old mansion house was burned Jan. 23, 1858. A new house, similar in form, size and style, and on the same site, was at once erected.

While in Hopkinton, straw braiding seems to have been an employment in which he was partially engaged, the "stint" being six yards per day. His ears were filled with weird stories of apparitions, seen on the old place, at night. These romantic tales sensibly affected him. "I was wont," he says, "in going through dark places, after night-fall, to whistle as I went, to keep my courage up." At school he was extremely bashful, and could hardly arise from his

seat to read or recite, without showing considerable emotion, such as "smiling or blushing, or laughing outright." "In those days money was money; a shilling was as much for the pocket of a boy, as a dollar at the present time, yet the little he then obtained he generally invested in good books, found at the country store." "Scott's Lessons," the book used by him at school, "I have always esteemed," he says, "as one of the best reading books for schools." "One of the books," he continues, "that amused my youthful fancy, was 'Betty Bark,' which my mother bought for me at Nehemiah Howe's store." Scott's novels were early, and later in life, among his favorites. He was familiar with the sayings and doings of Rob Roy, Old Mortality, Rebecca the Jewess, and others. The Lady of the Lake and Marmion were his delight. Thomson, Goldsmith, Addison, were among the preceptors, so to speak, of his childhood, and good old practical Benjamin Franklin, an instructor. When nearly threescore years of age he writes, that "his favorite authors are Virgil, Cicero, Dante, Racine, Milton, Addison, Cowper, White of Selborne, Goethe, Goldsmith and Walter Scott; his beloved religious writings, Thomas à Kempis, George Herbert, Blaise Pascal, Fénélon, Bishop Butler, Dr. Doddridge, and Dr. Wayland."

In 1821, he attended the school taught by Daniel Eames. He subsequently assisted Jesse Eames, who was a tinker and a nurseryman, and their landlord, in blowing his bellows, picking fruit, especially currants, of which he raised large quantities, and assisting him in their sale at country musters and other gatherings. He used to walk to meeting at Hopkinton, as he jocosely remarked, if he "could get anything to wear." He spent much time in "making wheels and dams," catching rabbits and partridges in snares, laying in large stores of nuts for winter use, burning coal in summer, and devoting himself to his studies, in school, the opposite season of the year. "Of his early teachers," he says, "Gilbert Dench Wilson, Col. Abijah Ellis and Daniel Eames exercised the most salutary influence over his mind."

On the first of April, 1826, being near 15 years of age, he went

to live with David Bigelow and Co., of Framingham, to learn the art of making paper. William Parkhurst was his teacher that winter. Here he studied Colburn's Arithmetic, as he says, "with my future wife. I was *amore captus* during that school term."

On the 4th of September, 1828, at the age of seventeen, he came to Boston, for the first time in his life. He walked to the State House, visited the markets and wharves, "bought a chemistry," &c., but remained in the city only one night. Soon after this, he entered Wrentham Academy, then under the charge of Mr. Isaac Perkins, studied grammar, chemistry, and Blair's rhetoric. "I read Robert Burns," he says, "with exquisite delight." This was his first entrance into an academy, "and the word seemed very large indeed." He now saw that he "could take position only by study." In the following November, he returned to the paper mill, carrying on his studies as he had opportunity, learning latin nouns and verbs while he was laying over the sheets of paper. His musical proclivities, which he seems to have inherited from his parents, now became developed. He performed on the violin, and wrote sheet music. While engaged in manual labor, he was striving, also, to elevate his mind. His mother, a kind and thoughtful woman, greatly encouraged him in these laudable endeavors. In September, 1829, he went to the Academy at Marlborough, under the charge of Mr. Amos Dean Wheeler —afterwards Rev. Dr. Wheeler, Unitarian minister, at Topsham, Me.,—where he "began to read Virgilius Maro." He studied very hard, as he had agreed to "keep the school" at Framingham Common the ensuing winter. Commencing in the month of December, he taught until the spring of 1830, when he made up his mind to enter College. At Amherst, in the following June, he began the Study of Greek and Latin under Mr. Chauncey Colton,—subsequently, Rev. Dr. Colton, of the Episcopal Church (see REGISTER, XXXI. 136),—reciting to Mr. Justin Perkins, since Dr. Perkins, of Nestoria.

March 1, 1830, he writes, "Begin to keep a Diary of my life. Am now in the employ of Mr. Bigelow, having $12.00 per month

and board for tending the engine." This Diary was kept, almost without the intermission of a day, till near the close of his last sickness. He also, with the aid of his parents and others, extended it backward to cover quite fully his earlier days; so that its first entry, bearing date April 21, 1811, reads, "I am born this day."

Mr. Nason was admitted to the freshman class in Brown University, Providence, R. I., October 6, 1831. Like many other students, some of whom eventually attained a high reputation, he taught school, while in College, in the winter season. He was a teacher in the towns of Hopkinton, Framingham, East Bridgewater and other places. Doubtless there are those now living who can testify to his carefulness and accuracy as an instructor, and to the true and ardent interest he took, personally, in their welfare. Among those with whom he was intimate, in college, he has mentioned the names of Leonard Bliss, subsequently author of the History of Rehoboth, Chapin, Everett, and Clarke. A surviving class-mate, ex-president Justin R. Loomis, of the University at Lewisburgh, Pa., now "Bucknell University," writes, April 2, 1888:—

> The lapse of more than half a century has obscured the memory of many things, and the minutia of much that must have been fresh for many years. I first became acquainted with Mr. Nason when we were class-mates at Brown, in 1831, and have known very little of him since 1835. I did know him as a college class-mate, and loved and honored him. I have reason to believe that his development occurred gradually, as he advanced in his life-work. But few of us are left, and soon there will be none.

The Greek language seems to have been a favorite study of our friend, while in College, in which, it is noted, he always had the mark of "excellent." The French and Italian languages, with which he was afterwards so fluent, occupied a portion of his studies at this time. He filled up his leisure by lecturing in Hopkinton and other places in the neighborhood, and for recreation read the English Classics and fingered the violin. Immediately after graduating, we find him teaching school in the pleasant town of Lancaster, Mass. "In respect to scenic beauty," he writes, "Lancaster stands preëminent among the towns in Worcester County." He was elected principal of the Cam-

bridge Latin Grammar School, in September, 1835, but soon resigned this position to travel South, and in February, 1836, left Boston, in the Brig Cervantes, bound for Charleston, South Carolina. Receiving letters and recommendations from his relative and friend, Dr. John E. Holbrook, a distinguished naturalist, then residing in Charleston, he soon lectured before Southern audiences on the Southern flora, having turned his attention immediately after reaching that section of our country, in an especial manner, to his botanical studies. On the 28th of November, 1836, he was married, in Augusta, Georgia, by the Rev. Stephen G. Bulfinch, to Myra Anne Bigelow, daughter o John and Eliza (Follansbee) Bigelow, of Framingham. The marriage ceremony took place at the house of Dr. Bowen. The next year he became editor and proprietor of the "Georgia Courier," a daily paper, published in Augusta, the capital of the State. He was made principal of the Academy at Waynesboro', Georgia, the seat of justice of Burke county, incorporated as a town in 1812. He began at this time his study of Hebrew and Theology under the Rev. Timothy M. Dwight. On the second day of November, 1839, he was admitted to the church. While in the South, as ever after, Mr. Nason was in sympathy with the colored people. His life was threatened, more than once, for acting as their defender. His sensibilities were shocked, to a great degree, on one occasion, as he witnessed a horrible sight, the hanging of a negro woman, which he describes in his journal.

Mr. Nason had time to pursue, to some extent, while at Waynesboro', his botanic researches. Books were a rarity in that region. He borrowed and read such as he could obtain, and did what perhaps few, if any, would have done even in such a straitened supply of literature, he "read entirely through, article by article, the original edition of the celebrated French Encyclopœdia, by Diderot and his friends."

In the spring of 1840, Mr. N. came to the North, and settled in Newburyport. In the month of August, of that year, he began teaching. He lectured at intervals, on the Southern flora, and on

Georgia, and kept up, for a while, his correspondence with the paper in Augusta. He soon after became principal of the High School in Newburyport, and later was elected principal of the Latin School in that town. While there he studied theology, edited a paper called "The Watch Tower," and in conjunction with his brother William Warren Nason, druggist, now of Great Falls, N. H., opened a book store in the place. His musical talents were not allowed to remain inactive. The harmonious sounds were more thoroughly cultivated and developed, causing him to be a still greater proficient, in this, one of his favorite and most agreeable studies. At the same time, he acquired a good degree of knowledge of the German, Spanish and Syriac languages, besides contributing various articles to the magazines and periodicals, and lecturing on a variety of subjects before lyceums. In January, 1849, he was engaged to conduct the music at the Old South Church, in Newburyport, at a salary of 205 dollars per annum. In July, of the same year, he received from the Essex North Association, a license to preach, taking lessons in oratory of Prof. Henry Mandeville, having, prior to this, lectured on the history of the French revolution. The Rev. Dr. Dimmick, of Newburyport, invited him to preach in his pulpit in the month of August, 1849, which exercise he engaged in, he says, "with fear and trembling." He removed to Milford, Massachusetts, the following season, and was there chosen principal of the High School. November 4, 1851, he failed of an election to the Mastership of the Boston Latin School, by two votes, Mr. Francis Gardner the successful candidate receiving thirteen votes, and Mr. Nason eleven. He was ordained minister of the Congregational Church in Natick, Massachusetts, May 5, 1852, the Rev. Leonard Withington, D.D., of Newburyport, preaching the ordination sermon. Mr. M. V. B. Bartlett, a member of this church, now a resident of South Natick, thought Mr. Nason a very godly man, one that he "loved as pastor and friend." He says :—

I shall never forget the sermon he preached from the text—"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," for, under God, it was the

means of my conversion. At another time, during the early part of our late war, he preached from the text—"I am for peace." This was a powerful sermon, and it is said did more than any thing else to fill the Natick quota of soldiers. He seemed to be at the front, in all good works, and his memory to me is always blessed.

During his pastorate in Natick, the Hon. Henry Wilson was one of his parishioners and constant hearers, and then, and ever after, was an intimate and cordial friend. Willard A. Wight, Esq., of Natick, treasurer of the Society, writes of Mr. Nason :—

I esteemed him as an upright, honest, christian man, of good common sense, fertile imagination, and a warm sympathizing heart. He was a close observer of men and things, and he used his knowledge skilfully in his intercourse with the people. His sermons, delivered with a deep, musical voice, were listened to with attention and general approbation, for they had clear arrangement and forcible illustrations. He occasionally preached to the children, and very successfully. Soon after he settled among us, the meeting-house being too small to accommodate the increasing numbers, a new and commodious house was built, at a cost of $28,000, and pews were sold to the value of upwards of $20,000, showing the unity and outward prosperity of the Parish. The weekly prayer meeting, which he called "the brook by the way," greatly refreshed and strengthened the growing church, into which one hundred and twenty members were received during his six years stay with us. The Sabbath school was to him as a beautiful flower garden and nursery, the hope of the future church. The children were strongly attached to him, for they felt that he loved them.

In 1856, while in Natick, Mr. Nason changed his relationship to the New England Historic Genealogical Society, of which he had been made a corresponding member in 1847, to that of a resident member. He became a life member in 1867, and was on the Publishing Committee of the Society from 1861 to 1864, and from 1865 to 1868. He was a member of the American Antiquarian Society, and a corresponding member of the New York Historical Society. Probably his name may be found on the rolls of other learned societies.

In the fall of 1858, he accepted a call from the Mystic Church, in Medford, Mass., "a church that receives its name, not from its doctrines, but from the river that flows through the town." He was installed as pastor, the vote of the church being unanimous, Novem-

ber 10th of that year, succeeding the Rev. Dr. Jacob M. Manning, who became junior pastor of the Old South Church in Boston. Mr. Nason continued, with great acceptance, minister of the Church in Medford, till Oct. 17, 1860, when he tendered his resignation. The church voted, reluctantly, to accede to Mr. Nason's request. Their action was ratified by a Council, held Nov. 19th. Deacon Charles Cummings, a member of Mr. Nason's church, says :—

He was considered by his people in Medford, as an active, discreet, and efficient pastor, a genial and sympathetic friend, and a citizen most philanthropic and valuable. The whole community felt the loss. Even the children, whose guardian he had become by appointment on the School Committee, and whom his wit, humor and practical advice had so often enlivened and encouraged, participated in the disappointment. Mr. Nason walked the streets and the fields with open eyes, and often made happy use of his observations. Instance the following. Entering the vestry for his weekly lecture, after a ramble in which he had witnessed the flight of some thistle seed, he made that flight the basis of his discourse, with admirable effect. Up to the very last, Mr. Nason was most affectionately remembered by those who knew him in Medford, and it was ever an assurance of a very large audience when he could be secured to preach or lecture in the Mystic pulpit.

In the spring of 1861, Mr. Nason settled in Exeter, New Hampshire, where he continued to officiate until the spring of 1865. Mr. Charles Marseilles writes :—

I am told that, during the late war, he was the most active and patriotic citizen of Exeter in looking after the needs and necessities of women and children whose husbands and fathers were absent on the tented field in the service of their country.

His "Brief Record of Current Events in Exeter, N. H., during the year 1863," number three, contains much valuable information, as did also the two preceding numbers of the series. "This little pamphlet," the preface states, "gives a complete list of all the soldiers' names, regiments, companies, wounded, dead, discharged, and the names of those who paid commutation money, furnished substitutes or went into the army under the last draft."

In 1862, while a resident, and minister in Exeter, Mr. Nason kindly consented to have the charge of one number of the New England Historical and Genealogical Register for that year. The four

numbers were edited, in order, by the writer of this memoir, Rev. Mr. Nason, the Hon. Charles Hudson, and Mr. John Ward Dean. In 1866, and again in 1867, Mr. Nason edited the two entire volumes.

In the spring of 1865, immediately after leaving Exeter, he purchased a farm of forty-five acres in North Billerica, Massachusetts, and took up his abode there in June, 1865. This movement was in accordance with a life-long wish. The farm, being much of it woodland, bordering on the old Middlesex Canal, was subsequently augmented, by purchase, to about 50 acres. Here in his beautiful homestead, which he appropriately named "Brightside," he spent the residue of his days, working on his farm, holding pastorates in Dracut and Lowell, and supplying pulpits for brief periods in Danielsonville, Connecticut, and other places, lecturing and writing, corresponding with his friends, and enjoying his books, a greater part of the time, for the more than a score of years remaining to him. His son William says :—

> His recreation was to work on his farm and in his garden, for in the true sense of the word he was a naturalist, and never lost his enthusiasm for the country. He ascribed his good health to change and variety in labor, and it was his delight to be at work, either in his study or garden, continually. His work, whatever the direction, was most emphatically the expression of his belief. Although, among the hundreds set out by his own hands, many a tree or shrub remained in life but a single season to grace the wayside, this, to him, was no discouragement. His principle was "to keep right on putting them in," for the cost, he said, was slight, and even if but a few lived to grow up, this would be ample compensation. And so, with each spring's return, he was wont to renew his efforts, and persevering to the last, only a few days before his death he insisted on observing "Arbor Day" by calling together the members of his family and directing them from his seat on the veranda how and where to place a number of shrubs and evergreens gathered from the woods he loved to call his own.

As an episode in his intensely busy life, every moment of whose time, during waking hours, until his last sickness, seems to have been almost literally occupied, may be mentioned the great interest he took in the famous gathering of the Howe family, at Harmony Grove, in South Framingham, on Thursday, August 31, 1871. He

not only contributed by his presence and influence, and the interest he felt on the occasion, to make this meeting of the clan a success, but also, by previous researches into the genealogy and history of the race, and the publication, after, of a terse and faithful account of the re-union, laid the family under lasting obligations to him for his fidelity, industry and good will. The motto chosen for the pamphlet was significant and appropriate :—"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

In August, 1874, Mr. Nason went to Europe, remaining fourteen months. He visited England, France, Italy and Switzerland, perfecting himself more particularly in the French and Italian languages, and obtaining much valuable information. His contributions to the papers from these sources were interesting and instructive. The ideas he gathered, in a special manner, of Italian life, the manners and customs of the country, and his observations and study of the traits and peculiarities of the inhabitants, were of manifold benefit to him, and through him to others. Their works of art, and the classic atmosphere continually surrounding him, were highly suggestive to his cultivated and appreciative mind. There is every reason to suppose that he enjoyed this tour, exceedingly, and that the thoughts and sentiments entertained by him in regard to the sights and people he had witnessed, permeated long after, and ever, his lectures, sermons and conversations. In a letter lying before me, received from him, dated Florence, Italy, July 29, 1875, 10 o'clock A.M., he writes :—

I am very much pleased with Florence. It is the paradise of Italy. In itself it is a cabinet of art, and works of the great masters meet your eye at every turning.

He was less pleased with Rome, Naples, Bologna, and Venice. But he adds :—

Florence is intelligent, artistic, beautiful. The situation is charming. It lies in Valdarno, with picturesque hills, among which is Galileo's dear Fiesole, surrounding it. My room is near the Duomo, and Giotto's Tower, a marvel of beauty. I shall not visit all the world. I prefer to study a few countries, as Italy, Switzerland, France, England and Scotland, thoroughly.

In 1877 he edited, in Boston, a paper published monthly, called "Home and Abroad," "devoted to the interests of the family circle and to affairs of the literary, scientific and art world in general." The first number contains an article from his facile pen, on "Ascending Mt. Vesuvius," and a translation by him, from the French of Emile Souvestre. Succeeding numbers had also original articles of interest and merit.

It seems to have been the desire and purpose of Mr. Nason, on his return home, to free himself from all pastoral duties and devote his time and attention to his books, of which he was passionately fond, his literary compositions and lectures; but he was soon invited to take charge of the Pawtucket Church in Lowell, and later, was called to the Centre Church in Dracut. He continued to labor in and for these two churches until 1885, and ministered in the latter, even, until his sickness, the last of January, 1886. On the 29th of that month he was taken suddenly ill, with stoppage in the bowels, followed by other complaints of a serious character, which brought him into a low and critical condition, "so that nothing," he writes, "but the most exquisite medical skill, and the Great One above, carried me through." From this state he gradually rallied, preached occasionally, and devoted himself in a partial degree to literary work. In the last letter the writer of this received from him, dated July 10, 1886, he says:—

> It makes my fingers tingle, my heart also, to get hold of my beloved books again. I want to devour them all at once. I do read a little in Greek (Homer), Latin (Cicero), French (Rénan), Italian (Pellico), English (Turner's Sacred History, Vol. I.), every day. I also write a little on the Nason Family, which I hope to bring out (O how imperfectly it must be!) this coming autumn.

On the 29th of November, following, his golden wedding anniversary took place, at the homestead. There was a large attendance of relatives and friends. His three brothers and four sisters were welcomed by him. Meeting together, as they did, an unbroken family chain, for the first time in their lives since they had grown up and separated, the scene was highly interesting and impressive. The

literary exercises, in charge of his son, the Rev. Charles P. H. Nason, then of Chelsea, were—reading the one hundredth psalm, prayer by Rev. Mr. Wilson, of Billerica, and the singing of a hymn, set to music, both of which were original, conducted by Professor Edward S. Nason, of Worcester, and his family. Poems and letters from absent friends, including one from the poet John G. Whittier, were read, and a matrimonial song sung, composed by the honored host himself. These were followed by words of tender reminiscence from Prof. Henry B. Nason, of Troy, N. Y., representing the immediate kindred, by the presentation of gifts, the reading of a poem, and other addresses. Mr. Nason being too feeble to respond, it was done, in a fitting manner, by his son Charles. The congratulations of the party were quietly extended to the worthy couple, and the exercises of the occasion appropriately closed.

Mr. Nason died at "Brightside," his home, in North Billerica, June 17, 1887. The Rev. Frederick A. Wilson, of Billerica, officiated at the funeral. An informal memorial service, commemorative of the life and labors of Mr. Nason, was held in the Central Church in Dracut, Sunday evening, June 26. Many personal friends from Lowell, Dracut and the neighborhood, desirous of paying their last tribute of affection and respect to their departed minister, assembled in the place where he had so often addressed them. On the right of the desk, appropriately enwreathed with smilax, evergreen and daisies, was a tablet, with these words in white letters, "Blessed are the dead." Over this was suspended a white dove, and in front of the pulpit was a photograph of Mr. Nason. Suitable remarks were made by Mr. A. T. Richardson, Rev. Mr. Haskell, Mr. J. J. Judkins, Deacons Coburn, Simonds and Boynton; reading of the scriptures and remarks by Rev. William W. Nason, with prayers by Mr. Judkins and Deacon Pray. A eulogy on Mr. Nason was read by Col. Robert B. Caverly, of Lowell, closing with appropriate verses, composed after a visit to the place of his friend's burial. Some of the favorite hymns and tunes of the deceased were rendered by the choir, such as "Louvan," "Stockwell" and "Selvin." Mr. Nason's own hymn, "Jesus only," was sung, with good effect.

Feeling testimony was borne to the fidelity and kindness of Mr. Nason, during the fourteen years of his pastorate there, and the eight or nine years of his labors with the Pawtucket Church at Lowell, to his character as a Christian, his popularity as a preacher and lecturer, his influence as a scholar, with affectionate remembrance of him as a friend and helper.

Mr. Judkins "spoke of the little things that sometimes turn the tide in the affairs of men. In Mr. Nason's case it was only the matter" of two votes that kept him "from going to Boston Latin school, where he might have spent his life as an unknown pedagogue. Thus he was saved to the grander work he has accomplished as preacher, hymnologist, lecturer and scientist."

Mr. Nason had given much attention to the genealogy of his family, but never satisfied himself entirely as to its early origin. He says:

It is certain that the Nason family, though not numerous, was in England in the 15th century, and that Richard Nason, from Rainsford Island, England, was one of the founders of Kittery, Me. Mr. Caldwell states, that Joseph, John and Benjamin, brothers of Richard, also settled in Kittery, which then embraced South Berwick, in which locality the Nasons had their home, and to them may be traced the lineage of most of the large and respectable Nason family now spread over New England, and to some extent over the United States. It is with sincere regret that I find myself unable to discover any connexion between the Nasons of Kittery, South Berwick, and those of Ipswich, Mass., from whom I am descended. It is not improbable, however, that more extensive researches may show an alliance between the two families. The proximity of Kittery to Ipswich, and similarity in the Christian names of the two families, would seem to indicate a common origin; yet, the tradition in our family is, that Willoughby Nason was the first one of my ancestors who came to New England; and this was more than hal a century after the arrival of Richard Nason and brothers in Kittery, Me. But who and whence was this Willoughby Nason?* On the Records of the Second Church in Boston, Dr. Increase and Dr. Cotton Mather being joint pastors, we are informed that "Willoughby Neeson was admitted to the church Nov. 29, 1691." (See History of the Second Church, by Rev. Chandler Robbins, D.D., page 266.) Of this Willoughby Neeson I can find nothing more recorded; but I am inclined to the belief, from the identity of the Christian name Willoughby, which has ever been kept in our

* The name of "Capt. Neason" appears in the year 1638 among the early inhabitants of Barbadoes "who then possessed more than ten Acres of Land." See REGISTER, xxxix. 138.

family, that this disciple of the Mathers removed to Ipswich, prior to 1712, and is the same Willoughby Nason from whom our family is descended. But this is mere conjecture. Of a certainty Willoughby and his wife, Ruth Nason, were settled in Ipswich as early as 1712, and there had a family, from one member of which our family is directly descended. This Willoughby Nason was by trade a stone mason, and with his wife an attendant on the ministry of the Rev. John Rogers, pastor of the first church, where their children were baptized. Of Willoughby and Ruth Nason little is known, save that they lived and died in Ipswich, left a respectable family, and were Christians, which, in one sense, is the most honorable title any mortal man can bear.

Willoughby Nason had also a wife Esther, who survived him. She administered on his estate, Jan. 12, 1724–5. The issue by one or both of these wives, were, sons Thomas, Robert, Willoughby and Anthony, and daughters Esther, Elizabeth, Martha and Mary. Thomas[2] Nason, son of Willoughby and Ruth Nason, married, prior to 1730, Sarah Perkins, of Ipswich, by whom he had seven children,—Thomas[3] (grandfather to Elias[5]), Margaret,[3] Sarah,[3] Sarah,[3] Nathaniel,[3] Abigail,[3] Margaret.[3] He removed with his family, prior to 1740, to the town of Walpole, Mass., incorporated in 1724, where his wife Sarah died Aug. 10, 1748, and in 1749 (date of publishment May 27, 1749) he married Mary Campernell, of Ipswich, by whom he had two children, Willoughby[3] and Mary.[3] Mary (Campernell) Nason died in Walpole, March 1, 1768.

Thomas,[3] son of Thomas,[2] and grandson of Willoughby[1] Nason, of Ipswich, was baptized April 29, 1739. He married 1st, Jemima Clark, of Foxborough, who died Dec. 8, 1770; 2d, m. May 13, 1773, Sarah Worsley, of Walpole, Mass., who died of consumption, in Walpole, about the year 1785. Children by Jemima were, John,[4] Ziba,[4] William,[4] Elias.[4] Children by Sarah, the second wife, were, Lucy,[4] Willard,[4] died young; Levi[4] (father of Rev. Elias[5]); Fanny.[4]

Levi,[4] son of Thomas[3] and Sarah (Worsley) Nason, born in Walpole, Mass., March 25, 1779; m. Sarah, dau. of Benjamin and Mary (Holbrook) Newton, Nov. 23, 1809. He died at Great Falls, N. H., March 11, 1854, at the residence of their son William W.

Nason. They left eight children, four sons and four daughters, all living with the exception of Elias, and all members of the Congregational Church. Their names :—Elias,[5] Eliza Edwards[5] (Bates), Mary Holbrook[5] (Footman), William Warren,[5] Edward Shepard,[5] Pamela Ann (Searle, Kinney), Charles, and Susan Arabella (Dearborn).

In a sketch of his father, Mr. Nason says, that:

He was left an orphan and brought up by Mr. David Fales, a farmer of Wrentham, till he reached the age of 16 years, when he went to live with Mr. Jeremiah Mann. Here he remained laboring on the place a little more than two years, after which he took charge of the homestead of Mrs. Jerusha Norton, until 1809." After marriage, he "hired a farm of Mr. Nathan Hawes about a mile easterly from Wrentham Centre." On arriving at a proper age he became a member and trumpeter of a company of cavalry, and was present as a guard at the execution of Jason Fairbanks, at Dedham, September 10, 1801, for the murder of Elizabeth Fales. In the war of 1812, Mr. Nason "was sergeant in the company of Capt. Moses Phipps, and one of the two men drafted from it for the service, the other being Mr. Michael Homer. Mr. Nason hired a substitute, but was himself sometime engaged in teaming ammunition to Lake Champlain, and returning to Boston with a load of flour. At one place on the route his clothes were stolen, and as cotton cloth was then one dollar per yard, the loss to him was serious. In carrying on the Frankland farm, at Hopkinton, he worked, as elsewhere, faithfully and industriously. The soil was productive, but potatoes then brought only 12 cents per bushel, and butter only the same per pound, so that it demanded unremitting industry and close economy to make the ends of the year meet. Still he managed to maintain his growing family and to keep out of debt. On leaving the Frankland place, January 20, 1822, he removed to the house of Jesse Eames, near by, and assisted him in his horticultural affairs. After subsequent removals, on the first of April, 1844, he went to reside at Newburyport, where most of his children were then living. Finally, he took up his abode at Great Falls, N. H., as before mentioned. Personally, Mr. Levi Nason was well built, robust and strong. In height he was about five feet, ten inches, and in weight about one hundred and sixty pounds. He had brown hair, gray blue eyes, and prominent but symmetrical features. Though his education was limited, he spoke with ease and correctness. He was strictly honest in all his dealings, his motto being "Owe no man any thing but love." He was an excellent farmer, doing his work orderly, seasonably, and well, and keeping every thing in its proper place, and in readiness for service. He loved his garden, and none ever excelled him in raising

culinary vegetables or in the neatness of the alleys and the beds of the kitchen garden. The plants all seemed to know him and to grow just as fast as they could on purpose to please him. He was especially careful as to the preservation of the farm and garden seeds, and therefore seldom disappointed as to their kind and germination. Of weeds he was a mortal enemy; to kill them he rose early. As good old Izaak Walton, he was very fond of the rod and line. He seldom left his favorite haunts on and near Sudbury River, the romantic falls on Indian Brook, the alder-covered pools of Cold Spring Brook, and other streams of Ashland, where he resorted, without something handsome for a piscatorial dinner.

Mr. Nason had a very fine ear for music, and a rich, clear and melodious voice. He was very fond of singing such patriotic songs as "The Star Spangled Banner," "The Death of General Wolfe," "Adams and Liberty," and Sumner's "Ode on Science." He also took great delight in sacred music, which he practised daily with no ordinary skill. He loved the old fugue tunes, and especially those in the minor key, as "All Saints New," by Hall, and "Complaint," by Parmenter. Among his favorites were "Mear," "Brattle Street," "China," "Pleyel's Hymn," and Smith's "Funeral Thought," which was sung at his burial.

Mrs. Levi Nason was an excellent manager of the household, bringing up with but slender means a large family of children and helping them to obtain an education. She was, in the words of St. Paul, "a keeper at home," and "a helpmeet" of her husband, industrious, self-denying, economical and pious. She was never happier than when seeing her children with some good book in hand. Her favorite books were, the Bible, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion, Saints' Rest. She was a good singer, and loved to join in rendering the old fashioned music set to the Psalms and Hymns of Dr. Watts.

The children of Rev. Elias[5] and Myra Anne (Bigelow) Nason were:

1. Paul Ford, born Feb. 19, 1838; captain and staff officer, 5th Army Corps, in the late war.
2. James Dwight, born Nov. 2, 1840; died April 4, 1861. See Register, xv. 283.
3. Charles Pinckney Holbrook, born Sept. 7, 1842; grad. Williams College, 1862; with Army of Potomac and in Government service at Washington, D. C., 1863 to 1865; m. Helen Augusta Bond, Nov. 17, 1870; at Theological Seminary, Andover, Mass., 1870 to 1872; ordained pastor of the Central Congregational Church, Chelsea, Mass., June 24, 1874; dismissed March 7, 1887; installed pastor of the 2d Presbyterian Church, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pa., May 5, 1887.

4. Emily Georgianna, born Nov. 30, 1844, married Dr. Charles H. Gerrish, of Exeter, N. H., Feb. 15, 1872.
5. William Walton, born Jan. 28, 1848; grad. Andover Theological Seminary, special course, 1877; m. Kate Julia Hooker, Jan. 1882; now in charge of the Central Church, and of the 1st or Hillside Congregational Church, in Dracut, Mass.
6. Florence Nightingale, born March 11, 1857.

Mr. Nason's initial contribution to the REGISTER appears to have been in 1847, while a resident of Newburyport. It is entitled—"The burial place at Old Town, Newbury, Ms.," being a transcript of "some of the more quaint and characteristic epitaphs" in that ancient cemetery. The next article, apparently, with his name affixed, in April, 1860, was a transcript, from the records, of the births in Hopkinton, Mass., from 1720 to 1757, inclusive, followed by "A Letter of Love in a 'Minister's Wooing,' a century and a third ago." This is a copy of a letter to Miss Jane Colman, daughter of the Rev. Benjamin Colman, of Boston. She became, at length, "absalute mistress of the citey of Medford," by her marriage with the Rev. Ebenezer Turell, Aug. 11, 1726.

"The old burial places in Exeter, N. H.," in 1862, was from his pen; in 1866, "Public Worship in the church at Hopkinton, Mass., in the old colonial times," a humorous sketch. In the same number, the "Indebtedness of the English to the Indian languages of America." Also, a Biographical sketch of Joshua Coffin, of Newbury, Mass. In 1867, "Journal of Rev. Joseph Baxter, of Medfield, missionary to the Eastern Indians in 1717;" "Memoir of Jacob Wendell, of Portsmouth, N. H.," the following year. "Memoir of William Bentley Fowle," 1869. "Memoir of Henry Wilson," 1878. "Current Events," from 1862 to 1868. Besides these, were the various contributions to the REGISTER, in connection with his editorial work for its pages.

His papers read before the Society, were:—1858. Some incidents in the Life of Sir Henry Frankland. 1859. The Life and Writings of Mrs. Susannah Rowson. 1860. The Celebrities of Hopkinton, Massachusetts. 1860. Ancient Psalmody of New England. 1861.

Our National Patriotic Music. 1863. On Daniel Webster. This was also delivered by request before the New York Historical Society, June 2, 1885. 1865. Eulogy on Abraham Lincoln.* 1865. Tribute to the Memory of Edward Everett. 1866. On the part taken by Americans in producing the great French Revolution. 1866. On the Literary Character of the Founders of New-England. 1868. The Old Bay State at the Front. 1868. An Address commemorative of the Life and Services of Gov. John A. Andrew. 1870. How Steam got across the Continent. 1871. The Model Town of Massachusetts. 1875. On the Ancient Psalmody of New-England; in a new form. 1876. The Law of Progress under the Light of History. 1878. My Minister, or Reminiscences of the Rev. Nathanael Howe of Hopkinton, Mass. 1879. Sir Henry Vane, the Defender of Civil and Religious Liberty both in New-England and Old (1612–1662). 1882. On Paper and Paper-making.

Mr. Nason had, in addition to the lectures delivered before the Society, numerous others. These were received at various times, in the most flattering manner, by appreciative and delighted audiences, in different sections of the country. Some of them were on the following subjects:—

1. "Originality," afterwards published. 2. "Nothing but a Dandelion," described by him as "scientific, poetical and humorous." 3. "Greenbacks," "humorous." 4. "The Grand Classic Oratorios." "The origin, nature, design, and progress of the Oratorios, together with sketches of the lives of Handel, Haydn, Beethoven and Mendelssohn." 5. "The mechanism, power and beauty of the Human Hand. Scientific and diverting." 6. "Our Indebtedness to Ireland. Historical, poetical and entertaining." 7. "Our Indebtedness to the Grand Army of the Republic." There were three "Art-lectures," so called, which were beautifully illustrated by the calcium light, under the care of Mr. A. H. Folsom:—1. The celebrated scenes of Switzerland; the Alps, Passes, Tunnel, Glaciers, &c. 2. The seven celebrated Art cities of Italy. 3. The Picturesque from Boston to the Golden City.

* This eulogy was given as a sermon, in the First Congregational Church, Chelsea, April 16, 1865; the day following the reception of the news of Mr. Lincoln's death. Quite through the night, Mr. Nason wrote with a glowing pen, hardly finishing his effort before the hour of morning service. That same week—being on his farm at North Billerica—the citizens of Exeter sent for him to deliver the Memorial Address at the Town Hall, April 19th. By request it was delivered before the New England Historic Genealogical Society, at their next monthly meeting, May 3, and soon after published. See Register, xix. 279, 375.

Mr. Nason had the pleasing faculty of re-writing and changing his lectures in phraseology and form, so that the same lecture, in name, would sometimes be almost like a new production when again and again used. This kaleidoscopic character of his writings gave a delightful change and variety to his entertainments. Much additional matter would be thereby introduced, novel and instructive.

His lectures "On the Bright-side," "The Telephone," "Sunshine and Shower," were pleasing and popular, as also one on "National Music," with an accompaniment on the piano, by his son Paul, illustrating the favorite music of different nations, with proper variations, such as, "Sweet Home," by Thalberg; "God save the King," by Oesten; the "Marseillaise," by Roessellen; the "Carnival of Venice," by Jaell; the "National Airs of America," by Wallace, &c.

His lectures and readings were so multifarious and diversified that it would be difficult to give an approximate list of these productions. He had such a versatility of mind, and such a wonderful power of application and presentation, as to make even the commonest things wonderful and effective, especially to the young, with whom he must have been a great favorite. "He speaks with graceful dignity," says one, "with genial humor and poetic fire, and never fails to command the admiration of his audience." "Few of the laborers in the general lecture-field," says the Lowell Courier, "have been so universally, and so deservedly successful, as the Rev. Elias Nason. He has a most dramatic power of description, a keen sense of humor, a sound common sense, a great command of language, remarkable power of illustration, and the auxiliaries of wide reading, culture, and good memory. We doubt if any lecturer in the field leaves an audience better satisfied, more pleasantly entertained, or more profited." His unique lecture on "Greenbacks" was one of his favorite themes, as it was, also, with the masses. The "Advocate," of East Boston, Sept. 1871, states that it had been "delivered twenty-six times that last winter." It abounded, as we have been told, in originality of expression, and genuine wit, keeping his hearers in the

best of humor, and eliciting their plaudits at its close, "while at the same time administering sharp castigation for certain follies and frailties common to humanity." His lectures on music and psalmody were expressed in simple but forcible language, gushing forth as from a fountain of love and enthusiasm. They were welcomed by musical societies, amateurs and historians. Being thoroughly proficient in the art of stenography, he recorded his own thoughts and the words of others with wonderful rapidity; and for the most part his sermons were delivered from "short-hand" manuscripts.

We think the power of Mr. Nason was owing, in a great measure, to his pleasing address, fervor of manner, simplicity, and matter-of-fact illustration. He appeared to make the most and the best of every thing he handled. Evidently, he must have been quick in his perceptions, of a retentive mind, with a strong and rapid flow of thought. It was with him a common expression, "When you find a thing, make a note of it." He would gather up, in his way-side walks, his intercourse with others, his movements to and fro, in cars or carriages, some morsels of information to give point to a discourse, or pith to an illustration. If he, casually, met a mechanic going to his daily toil, he would in many instances carry much from that person's conversation that would be of service to himself, in one way or another, making the man, also, and his labors better understood personally, by drawing out ideas, latent in the mind, that the owner was unconscious of possessing. He was quite familiar with railroad conductors and engineers, and loved to converse with them. On one occasion, and perhaps more than once, he ran an engine, for a considerable distance on the road, after receiving proper instructions how to operate.

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The publications of Mr. Nason were:

(1) Songs for the School Room, 1842. (2) Chrestomathie Française, 1849. (3) Memoir of the Rev. Nathanael Howe, of Hopkinton, 1851. (4) Thou Shalt not Steal, a Sermon preached in Natick, 1852. (5) Strength and Beauty of the Sanctuary, a Dedication Sermon, Natick, 1854. (6) Congregational Hymn Book, 1857. (7) Vestry Hymn Book, 1857. (8) Congregational Tune Book, 1858. (9) New Congregational Hymn and

Tune Book, 1859. (10) Our Obligations to Defend Our Country, 1861. (11) Sermon on the War, 1861. (12) Songs for Social and Public Worship, 1862. (13) Record of Events, Exeter, N. H., 1861, 1862, 1863 (three pamphlets). (14) Eulogy on Abraham Lincoln, 1865. (15) Eulogy on Edward Everett, 1865. (16) Fountains of Salvation, 1865. (17) Life of Sir Charles Henry Frankland, 1865. (18) Biographical Sketch of Joshua Coffin, 1866. (19) Journal of the Rev. Joseph Baxter, of Medfield (in 1717), 1867. (20) Eulogy on Gov. John A. Andrew, 1868. (21) Our National Song, 1869. (22) Memoir of William B. Fowle, 1869. (23) Life of Mrs. Susannah Rowson, 1870. (24) Carmina Cœli, 1870. (25) Life of Henry Wilson, 1872. (26) Howe Family Gathering, 1872. (27) Gazetteer of Massachusetts, 1874. (28) Life of Charles Sumner, 1874. (29) Centennial Oration, Billerica, 1876. (30) Lives of Moody and Sankey, 1877. (31) History of Dunstable, Mass., 1877. (32) Histories of Beverly, Essex, Hamilton, Ipswich, Manchester and Rowley, in the History of Essex County, Mass., 1878. (33) History of the County of Worcester, Mass., in the History of New England, 1879. (34) Histories of Dracut, Dunstable, Hopkinton and Tyngsborough, in the History of Middlesex County, Mass., 1880. (35) A Literary History of the Bible, 1881. (36) Discourse on the Death of James A. Garfield, 1881. (37) Originality; a Lecture, 1882. (38) Hand Book of St. Augustine, Florida, 1883. (39) Histories of Nantucket, Brockton and Holbrook, in Chapin's New England and the South, 1883.

Works unpublished:—History of Hopkinton; Genealogy of the Nason Family; Grains of Gold from the Alcoves of my Library.

In prospective:—Biographical Dictionary of noted men and women in Massachusetts. A volume of his own poetical compositions. Christ in Song.

His writings for the press have been varied and numerous. During the war, and while in Europe, he was a correspondent for *The Traveller*, *Christian Union*, *Congregationalist*, *Youth's Companion*, and other papers, under the name of "Waybridge." He several times visited the seat of war, during the nation's struggle, making personal observations. Much of the information thus obtained was communicated to the *Traveller*, afore mentioned. Being an active member of the United States Christian Commission during the years 1861–1865, he had ample facilities for obtaining news directly from the army. Besides several hymns, he wrote many short poems which were printed in the secular and religious papers. "His knowledge of versification enabled him to see, at a glance, the errors or

defects in a verse or hymn, and his ideas of correct composition were such that his criticisms were sometimes very severe." Interesting articles on "Church Psalmody of the Olden Times," were furnished by him, in 1877, to a paper called "The Contributor," published in Boston. Number V. of the series is before us, in which he writes concerning the fugue tunes, and gives brief sketches of composers, in those and similar lines of music, such as Timothy Swan, of "The New England Harmony," who composed poetry as well as music, and was author of "China," named at first "Calcutta," one of the most original of our American melodies. It is finely adapted to the devotional words of Dr. Watts,—"Why do we mourn departing friends," &c., and when sung, as it used to be, in a soft and subdued manner at funerals, has served to allay the sorrow of many a stricken heart. "There is enough music in 'China,' said a great musical critic once to me, 'for a whole oratorio.' It has the wild and wailing spirit of some old coronach of the Highlands of Scotland, and would seem to have been inspired by musing on the melancholy songs of Ossian." Other composers noticed in this article, are, Oliver Holden, publisher of "The American Harmony," who wrote "Coronation," "Confidence," etc.; Daniel Read, to whom we are indebted for "Windham," "Winter," and "Sherburne," publisher of "The Columbian Harmony;" and Jacob Kimball, of "The Rural Harmony," who composed the tune called "Invitation."

His notice of Mrs. Sarah Flower Adams, who wrote the popular hymn, "Nearer my God to Thee," seems discriminating and just. This criticism, by a Trinitarian, an Orthodox Congregationalist, so called, of a lady reputed Unitarian, is liberal, and catholic in a high degree, perfectly in keeping, with a long continued and intimate personal knowledge of our esteemed departed friend. The article was furnished to the "Congregationalist," Oct. 17, 1870, to which paper he was a contributor. He says:—

This is one of the most beautiful hymns in our language. It is founded on the celebrated dream of Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 12–22), and most sweetly and touchingly expresses the aspiration of a bruised and chastened spirit for the consolations of a brighter and a better world. In imagery,

in diction, in sentiment, the hymn is exquisite. Every word is fitly chosen, fitly introduced, as an apple of gold in a picture of silver. The rhyme and rhythm are perfect; the melody, clearness, precision, and compactness of the language, are inimitable. It is the hallowed outbounding of a soul in its most profound devotion after God. In the earnest simplicity of this lyric, art is not for an instant thought of, yet it is constructed on its highest principles. In form it is faultless as the "Elegy" of Gray, or the "Dirge in Cymberline" of Collins; in thought it is the aspiration of every earnest Christian heart; hence no recent hymn has acquired in England or America such popular favor. No modern manual of praise and prayer is, or can afford to be, without it; no congregation can unite in singing it, especially to Dr. Mason's beautiful tune of "Bethany," without emotion.

After a brief sketch of the writer of the hymn, he continues, in regard to her character:

The piety of this gifted lady was earnest, ardent, and enlightened. She lived to bless and beautify the world by the angelic ministrations of a great, friendly and Christ-loving hand and heart.

The eloquent tribute of Mr. Nason to the memory of Hon. Edward Everett, delivered before the New England Historic Genealogical Society, in 1865, may be considered not only as one of his best efforts, but also one of the best ever delivered in regard to the life and career of that distinguished orator and statesman. We give a short extract:—

What, then, are the leading traits and characteristics of the lamented Everett as a literary man? I answer, A natural quickness of parts, together with a corresponding flexible and delicate physical organization, which enabled him to seize upon knowledge with surprising certainty, and bear away the sweets of it while others were still hesitating to commence the task. He acquired the art, for which Webster was so remarkable, of reading by the page, instead of by the line,—grasping the writer's meaning at a glance. As an eagle on the wing, he pounced upon his game, and never missed. This, with his most loyal memory, made him, *par excellence*, a ready man,—ready not only to extract the nectar from the flowers of literature, but to summon, as by a magician's wand, whatever he desired into immediate use. Most of you, gentlemen, must have observed how quick his mind was, in his speaking, to lay hold of any passing circumstance, and to weave it naturally into the structure of his discourse, leaving neither joint nor suture visible. On one occasion, through the failure of another, he was called on suddenly to deliver the Phi Beta Kappa oration at Cambridge. Mr. Longfellow had agreed to read a poem at the close of the

address; but, finding that Mr. Everett was to make it, he insisted upon going through his part in advance of the distinguished orator. Mr. Everett heard the new production with attention; but it were hard to conceive the surprise of the author of "Evangeline" to hear, a few moments afterwards, the most beautiful lines of his unprinted poem dropping as pearls from the orator's lips, and admirably turned to the embellishment of his own discourse.

His Eulogy on Abraham Lincoln, delivered in Boston, the same year, before our Society, is also truly admirable and just. He said:

His heart, though mighty as a lion's, was full of the milk of human kindness; his golden charities, as the perfume of the sandal wood, flowed out even upon the axe that was cutting his life away; and perhaps no man ever revealed more of the spirit of that touching verse of a beloved poet of our own Society,—

"A little word in kindness spoken,
A motion or a tear,
Has often healed the heart that's broken,
And made a friend sincere."

He had a great, loving, generous heart, and his actions come to us as sunbeams through the cloud of war; they enshrine him eternally in the deepest chambers of the soul of his country.

Mr. Nason was a man of great sociability, with a word of cheer and a look of kindness for others. In his conversations and lectures he sometimes dealt in superlatives, but his tone and manner toward you had a corresponding elevation. He was quick to discern good traits in others, and his friendships, when made, were strong and lasting. His mind was so constituted by nature, and enlarged and expanded by culture and observation, that he could take in and dwell upon almost any subject suitable for reflection and conversation. This versatility, as has before been hinted at, may be considered truly wonderful. Says his son William:—

His love for the languages never forsook him, and in Latin, Greek, French, Italian and Spanish he was at home. He had made a study and acquired the knowledge of twelve different languages, and there was no subject in natural history, botany, geology, mineralogy, philosophy, metaphysics or science but what interested him and gained a share of his attention.

Some years ago, in company with the writer, the conversation turned to the subject of favorite authors of poetry. He sat down

and with his pencil, in a playful manner, made two drawings on paper, in the form of a pyramid. On one he placed the names of his favorites in American poetry, on the other those who were English writers. At the base of the pillar, on the American shaft, stood the name of Whittier. Following, in order, toward the top, were the names of Bryant, Halleck, Longfellow, Poe, Sigourney, Willis, Smith, Holmes, Amelia Welby, Pierpont, Peabody, Aldrich, Muhlenburg, Lowell, Lunt. On the English column, first, Byron, then Scott, followed by Moore, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Hemans, Heber, Smith, Crabbe, Keble, Wilson. He was himself a poet of no inferior order; he wrote many hymns, and composed not a few tunes. The well known lines, commencing, "Jesus only, when the morning," have had a wide popularity. This hymn sprang from the heart of the writer, as the close to a sermon on the same theme, at Natick, in the year 1856. It was first published in a juvenile paper, at Boston, called the "Well Spring," with the author's own music attached. It has since taken its place in several hymn books. The "Congregational Hymn Book for the service of the Sanctuary," published in 1857, which he compiled, contains some of the choicest effusions of Watts, Doddridge, Wesley, Mrs. Steele, Newton, Heber, Montgomery and others. His modesty, perhaps, allowed him to give but one of his own composition (hymn 110), which is an inspiring lyric, commencing:—

"To Thee, O God, in grateful praise,
All nature wakes harmonious lays;
The rolling flood, beast, bird, and bee,
Join in perpetual praise to Thee."

He had no sympathy with those compilers of hymn books, so common in our day, who alter and torture the phraseology and sentiments of the original to suit their own notions of propriety and praise. In his preface to the "Congregational Hymn Book," he writes:—

Believing that the changes and mutilations which most of our standard hymns have from time to time undergone are alike at variance with good taste and literary integrity, and that a continuance of this practice must prove highly detrimental to the best interests of hymnology, the compiler

has ventured on no alterations and emendations in the hymns of this collection, except in the way of abridgment, or of correcting grammatical and rhythmical errors, or of restoring the hymns to their original form, which is found to be, in almost every instance, the most lyrical, the most devotional, and the best. The psalms of Dr. Watts have been collated with his own edition of 1719, and both psalms and hymns with the quarto edition of his works published by his executors in 1753.

The hymns of other writers, mentioned, were "read and rectified by early editions of their respective works," and others given as revised by their own hands.

Mr. Nason had contemplated publishing, in a small volume, a selection of his poetical compositions, but to the regret of his friends the work was never done. Says his son Charles:

He maintained a large correspondence throughout his life, and the letters received by him were carefully preserved. His collection of autographs, classed alphabetically, covered a wide range among men of letters in this country and abroad.

He was a lover of "small books;" *multum in parvo* would be his motto in regard to them. Books that could be taken in the hand, and transferred readily to and from the pocket, were the books that for utility and convenience he delighted to use. How often his pleasant face and form might be seen, in years gone by, bending over, and looking eagerly in, receptacles for books, outside the windows of stores in Cornhill, Brattle Street and elsewhere, for his mental treasures. How judiciously selections for his railway travels, sometimes monotonous and tedious, would be made, the time beguiled, and the public benefited, in lecture or by conversation, through those literary findings. His library, containing at one time, as estimated, some three thousand volumes, in various languages, was a curiosity-shop of materials for thought and suggestion, not always found, in the same degree, in larger or more costly tomes of the "collector," so called, the amateur or the specialist. He was fond occasionally of reading, for recreation, some of the lighter literature of the day; and as he had not always sufficient time at his command to select from, or read, the fruitful emissions of the press, he arranged with a young lady of his acquaintance, in whom he confided, to make choice,

among the novelties, of such stories, romances, or tales, as she, in her judgment, thought would be pleasing or agreeable to him. She succeeded so well, in this respect, that he used, often, to take those very books to read that were suggested to him by his fair assistant. On relating the circumstances to a female in New Hampshire, with whom we became acquainted, some time after the death of Mr. Nason, she remarked that the person mentioned was her sister.

It gives us great pleasure, in closing this memoir, to present to our readers a few testimonials in regard to the life, character and services of our departed friend, by those who knew him well. Our worthy associate, John Ward Dean, A.M., the editor of this journal, remarks :—

To the best of my recollection, I was introduced to the Rev. Mr. Nason in 1856, by the late Samuel G. Drake, A.M., then editor of the REGISTER. I had known him by reputation before. In the fall of 1857, I was authorized by the Board of Directors of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, of which board I was secretary, to invite him to read a paper before the society. He accepted, and in March, 1858, gave us a paper on "The Life and Times of Sir Henry Frankland." This was the first time I had heard Mr. Nason and the first time that he lectured before the Society. I was surprised and delighted with the paper, as were his other hearers The incidents in the life of Sir Charles Henry Frankland, baronet, so strange and romantic, were new to me, and the picturesque manner in which he portrayed them carried us along spellbound to the close of his paper. From that time he was a favorite with the members of the society, and whenever it was announced that he was to address us, a full audience was sure to greet him.

Afterwards I heard him in the pulpit and lecture hall, where he showed the same fervid and impassioned eloquence which captivated my imagination when I first listened to him. The matter as well as the style of his addresses commended them to his hearers. He had collected a vast fund of information on a wide range of subjects, and when the occasion required was able to present it in an attractive form. For at least a score of years his lecturing tours included all parts of New England, with occasional visits to other sections of the country. So popular was he, that a lecture in a town in one year was almost invariably followed by an invitation the next year.

Mr. Nason had the same qualities as a writer that he had as a speaker. His books on literary subjects are full of rich thoughts clothed in beautiful language. Those of a statistical character bear evidence of conscientious

and continuous labor. All show a vigorous intellect, cultivated by reading and reflection.

He was a delightful companion—full of vivacity, wit and wisdom. His spirits were joyous and buoyant. He looked upon the bright side of every thing, and encouraged others to do so. He was a faithful as well as a warm friend. I enjoyed much his visits to the rooms of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, where he frequently called upon me, and where we discussed our plans of literary work and talked about what was going on in the historical and literary world.

Rev. Edmund Dowse, D.D., of Sherborn, Mass., who on the 10th of October last celebrated the 50th anniversary of his pastorate in that place, writes:—

I first became acquainted with Mr. Nason at the time of his installation at Natick. While he was pastor of that church he was my nearest clerical neighbor. We were very often together, and our relations were always of the pleasantest kind. He was uniformly courteous, kind and reciprocally helpful. He was a scholar of varied acquirements, which he utilized in his sermons and lectures in such a way as to make them peculiarly interesting and attractive. He was possessed of an unusually nice literary taste. This was apparent in all his productions, but it was especially conspicuous in the Hymn Book that he compiled and published while at Natick, and which he desired me to review with him while in manuscript. This exercise afforded me much pleasure and gave me a high appreciation of his qualities as a writer, a poet, and hymnologist. I am happy to bear witness to his reputation as a gentleman, a scholar and a genial and warm-hearted friend."

Rev. Caleb Davis Bradlee, D.D., senior pastor of the Unitarian Church at Harrison Square, Dorchester, thus feelingly expresses himself:—

"You have asked me to say a few words for Brother Nason, and I hardly know how to refuse to speak for him, when he was always so ready to speak for others, and has scattered so many flowers over the graves of those whose lives have been so precious, and the memories of whom will never perish. He certainly had a keen spiritual eye by which he could instantly detect all the best parts of a character, and it was a treat to see him take up a life that had been passed on earth and had gone to God, and by his skilful rhetoric and loving soul show us all the bright spots, and cover us with the mantle of all that was great, good and glorious in the ascended prophets.

As a scholar he was cosmopolitan. Master of many languages he could wander into various fields where but few of us would dare to venture, and

he would bring back from his search abundant sheaves that would nourish, strengthen and inspire those of us who were blessed by the bestowal of his treasures. As a friend, too, none were more affectionate, inspiring, comforting and loyal, for he was quite as ready to correct as to approve, and oftentimes his genial encouragement would stir a timid heart into noble resolves. He was, also, the Christian gentleman; politeness was baptized with unction, and the greeting was as sincere as it was warm; having effusive lips, perhaps, but those lips consecrated by a loving soul.

I shall never forget words that he once spoke to me that have been a power for good ever since he uttered them; and when he said, years ago, "Let your light shine," he gave to my soul a courage that has been to me a great help all through the various duties that I have had to meet; and most grateful am I to him that he thus strengthened my faith, and uplifted my heart. I wish I could say more, for I could not say too much, though I most certainly can exclaim, Blessed be his memory forever and ever.

Rev. William J. Batt, of Concord, Mass., furnishes the following:—

The beginning of my ministry was in a town adjoining that in which Mr. Nason lived. I then first knew him. His friendliness at that time drew me to him and won my esteem. In those days, also, I first heard him in the pulpit. The sermon was preached before the Conference, and was the one thing of the entire occasion which I have never forgotten. It was upon "Light" as a symbol of Christ. The beauty of the thought, the energy of the delivery, and the sympathy of the preacher with his theme, all combined to make the sermon a model for imitation. Whenever that subject is announced in the pulpit, I still say to myself, "that is Mr. Nason's subject."

Mr. Nason never impressed me more by his remarkable qualities and gifts than in his later years. He seemed to me then a fine illustration of the scripture that promises the good man abiding strength in his old age. His lecture upon "Manliness" was very successful in our community, but a few years before his death. Its repetition was called for, and I can hardly think of "the human hand," without recalling him who spoke about it in such a wonderful way. It was, however, his enjoyment of pulpit work, his very late continued force as a preacher, his hold upon the affectionate respect of his hearers, and the fruitfulness of his preaching even in life's decline, that gave the peculiar charm to his last years.

Mr. Daniel C. Colesworthy, of Boston, justly says:—

For versatility of talents I know of but few, if any, who would compare with the late Rev. Elias Nason. He seemed to be familiar with science, philology, mechanics, botany, history and genealogy. He was at home

among the trees of the forest, and the birds of the grove, and always found pleasure in contemplating the works of his Creator. He was kind and social to all classes—to the humble and the elevated—the ignorant and the learned, and his friends were found in all conditions of society, and among people of all ages. A practical, every day man, Mr. Nason did good in a thousand instances where multitudes fail to see the opportunity. He was loved by all classes in the community, having a kind word and a smile for every one he met. I miss the friend of a life time and shall never cease to remember the favors bestowed, betraying an unselfish disposition, a genial nature and a heart alive to the interests of God and humanity.

Rev. Joseph P. Bixby, of Revere, Mass., speaks appropriately of our mutual friend :—

I am glad to testify to the fidelity of Rev. Elias Nason as a minister during the last years of his life. I exchanged with him when he was serving two parishes, one in Lowell, and one in Dracut, and was surprised to find what spiritual fruit he was gathering, and to learn how greatly he was esteemed by his people.

He was the most social man of my acquaintance, and I think I may add, also, the most genial. He was exceedingly versatile as a scholar, excelling as preacher, lecturer, historian and writer. His soul was full of music, and few could lead a praise service as he could. In his death every one who knew him has lost a true christian friend.

We close with a loving tribute from the Rev. Nathan F. Carter, of Concord, N. H. :—

I became intimately acquainted with Rev. Elias Nason nearly thirty years ago, when he was pastor of the First Church in Exeter, N. H., where I attended service while Principal of the High School there. Ever since, during his life, occasional meetings and correspondence served to strengthen our mutual attachment, and increase my admiration of him as a man, friend, minister, lecturer and scholar. He was one of the most genial men I ever met, warm-hearted, sympathetic, confiding, and overflowing with good humor. His presence, like the sunshine, was full of inspiration. He had rare conversational powers, and was both entertaining and instructive. Few men were more observing, and had a wider and more versatile knowledge of men, places and things. After visiting a new place in his winter lecturing, he could give more historic facts of it, than many, after years of residence. I have been astonished at the fulness of such acquisitions. He seemed to have an instinct for them, and never to forget a fact once learned. He was a great lover of nature, and constantly drew from it illustrations and analogies, in fresh and racy ways, for the enrichment and perspicuity

of his literary and pulpit work. As a preacher, he always had something to say, original and interesting, and often, as others have remarked, by the fervor of his eloquence seemed to lift one almost to heaven. His war sermons were especially eloquent and stimulating, and showed him a patriot to the heart's core.

As a lecturer he was entertaining and interesting, often pointing his discourse with polished shafts of wit, humor and satire, which his audiences greatly enjoyed. Few could interest and hold their attention better than he. A practical teacher once remarked, after hearing one of his lectures, he was "thankful *one* minister in New Hampshire knows *how to speak*."

His scholarship was extensive, intelligent, discriminating, and on many subjects an authority.

As I remember my intercourse with him during these many years, I am constrained to add my testimony to his superior qualities of mind and heart, making him one whose society and friendship were greatly to be prized. He had his imperfections, like others, but, as a Christian man he was noble, and generous to a fault, a lover of God and his fellow men, ready to help all who needed his help, and seeking, as best he could, to impress himself for good on his generation. In all the circle of intimate acquaintances, I have known but few whom I have deemed worthy, for his many virtues, of so warm a place in my heart! His memory is like a benediction.

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